

SKETCH  
OF THE  
RISE, PROGRESS, AND PRESENT CONDITION  
OF THE  
EXPRESS SYSTEM,  
BY H. WELLS.

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A PAPER READ BEFORE THE  
AMERICAN GEOGRAPHICAL AND STATISTICAL SOCIETY,  
FEBRUARY 4, 1864.

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ALBANY:  
VAN BENTHUYSEN'S STEAM PRINTING HOUSE.  
1864.



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## S K E T C H.



MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN :

For the honor you have conferred upon me by your request to prepare a paper on the rise, progress, and present condition of the Express business, I am doubtless indebted to my generally well known connection with it. I am, however, fully convinced that there are among yourselves gentlemen, whose familiarity with historical and statistical details, and whose knowledge of the proper mode of stating and arranging them, render them far better qualified than I am to undertake the duty of preparing the outline which I have now the pleasure of submitting to you.

I say *outline*, because to attempt a detailed statement, or even enumeration, of *all* the expresses that have been in operation for longer or shorter periods, at different places and times, would require a much more extensive research than I am able to give to the subject, and, could it be accomplished, would furnish matter for a volume, the perusal of which would occupy several of your sessions.

In your polite communication of the 10th Dec., you use the expression, "of the world;" but as (so far, at least, as I have been able to ascertain), there is not, outside of this country, any such organized system of transportation as that which we designate "the Express," the paper I now have the honor of reading

to you will, necessarily, be confined to the Express business as organized and conducted *in* the United States of North America, and *from* them to foreign countries.

I am aware that in England and France,—and the same *may* be the case in other countries,—associations have been formed for the transmission of the smaller packages of merchandise and valuable property; but these do not correspond, in several important particulars, to *our* Express companies. In England, one or more “Parcels Delivery Companies” (which were first established, I believe, about twenty years ago) proposed to transport small parcels of money, jewels, and merchandise to all parts of the metropolis and the country, forwarding them by railroad when practicable, and by the stage-coach where railways had not been constructed. These companies, however, soon became nothing more than collecting and delivering agents for the various railway companies, except in that part of their business which consisted of collecting and distributing parcels in the metropolis and the larger towns. They found it impossible to carry out their original intention, because they did not receive from the railway companies the facilities so freely accorded, in this country, to our Expresses. No special cars or trains, or special facilities for the safe custody of the parcels and packages intrusted to their care, were furnished to them; instead of being permitted to transport and pay freight on their consignments *in bulk*, as they expected to do, they were deprived of this source of profit by being required to pay for each separate parcel at the same tariff rates that were exacted from private individuals; their parcels were not put in charge of a special messenger, whose duty it was to deliver them to the

companies' agents along the line of his route; and no adequate provision could be made by them for the safe and prompt delivery of the articles intrusted to them for transmission. Moreover, the railroads connecting the chief cities and commercial towns of Great Britain are short when compared with those of this country, and, in many instances, though constructed by different companies, are "worked" by but one; the managers are thus enabled to conduct the package as well as the heavy freight business, and to secure *all* the profits of such traffic to themselves.

In France, as far as I know, associations for the conveyance of parcels throughout, even, any considerable extent of that country have never been successful; partly because French railways are mainly great trunk lines, comparatively few in number, running only from Paris, as the centre, to some important city on the coast or inland frontier, and not affording facilities of traffic to very many inland cities and towns; and partly, because the French people do not possess the business tact and energy of either Americans or English. Moreover, in France and other portions of the European continent the government monopolizes and treats as a source of revenue, the transportation of all parcels and packages not exceeding a prescribed weight.

Attempts to establish any general Express system throughout the European continent,—if they ever have been, or should be, made,—must, I think, be inevitably frustrated by the vexatious delays, expenses, interruption of transit, and insecurity attendant on the passport system, and the collection of municipal and governmental revenue imposts at the entrance gates of cities and at the custom-houses on the frontier lines of Kingdoms and States, the territories of

some of which so interlock with each other, and can be crossed in an hour or two, or even in a few minutes.

The distinguishing features of the American Express system,—speed, safety, economy, and responsibility,—have not been, perhaps cannot be, attained in Europe; and if not there, certainly we cannot look for them in other less civilized and less commercial portions of the globe.

The Express system is due, in its origin, to American ingenuity; in its development, to American enterprise; in its almost perfect organization, to American business tact and sagacity; and the confidence of the community in it has been secured by the much tried yet never failing integrity of its managers. And wondrous as is the rapidity with which the primeval forests of this wide country have been cleared, and thriving cities, towns, and villages established on spots, where, but a few years since, only the wigwam of the Indian, the log-hut of the pioneer, or the den of the wild beast could be found; marvelous as is the extent to which railroads have been constructed through vast tracts where, within the memory of men yet in their prime, only the lone hunter or the intending settler wended his way; exhaustless as appears the fertility of American inventiveness; proud as Americans may justly be of their Fulton, Morse, and Ericsson: I think that untiring perseverance and unflagging energy, triumphing over seemingly insuperable obstacles; unflinching endurance of hardships, exposure and fatigue; fidelity to trust reposed; sagacity to foresee, and tact to provide for a public want,—all which have been exhibited to a remarkable degree in the establishment and management of the Express business,—entitle its founders and conductors to no smaller a meed of

praise than is readily awarded to the pioneers of our settlements, the constructors of our railroads, the inventors of our telegraphs, our steamboats, our iron-clads, and our almost numberless labor-saving and wealth-producing machines.

As I frequently use the term, "Express system," it may be well for me to explain, here, that that expression is *properly* applicable only to the method according to which the Express business is done in New York, the Middle, Southern, and Western States. In the Eastern States, generally, the Express business is carried on by a very large number of local expresses running only between certain, not far distant, termini, and each independent of all others. It is impossible to give even an estimate of the number of these; some idea of it may, perhaps, be formed from the statement in "Lloyd's Railroad Weekly" for September, 1863, that no less than 130 minor expresses run from *only three* offices in Boston. In New York, as the commercial metropolis of the Western Hemisphere, facilities of communication with all parts of the continent and the immense amount of constantly augmenting business, necessitated the establishment of associations which could, by their capital, guarantee the public against losses, and, by systematized labor, furnish the required accommodations more economically and effectively than individuals or ordinary business firms could do. Such associations have, accordingly, been formed under the laws of the State of New York regulating the organization of joint-stock companies, with capitals varying from \$250,000 to \$3,000,000.

It can scarcely be necessary to say that the present immense extent of Express business was, probably, not even dreamed of when the first step was taken

which led to it. "Great oaks from little acorns grow," and "the day of small things is not to be despised." The force of these sayings was never better illustrated than in the rapid and prosperous growth of the "Express" from a *very* small beginning.

When Wm. F. Harnden, seeking some active employment which would release him from the close confinement imposed by his duties in the office of the Boston & Worcester R. R., undertook, in 1839, to establish a "package express" between Boston and New York, he, probably, only contemplated such a business as would provide a remunerative income and congenial employment for himself. The feasibility of such an enterprise was, it is not improbable, suggested by the fact that the stage-drivers on the various roads out from Boston were in the habit of carrying and delivering small parcels, and of executing such commissions as were intrusted to them. These stage-drivers, many of whom were proprietors, in part or wholly, of the stock needed in their business, were ordinarily trustworthy and responsible men, to whose charge valuable packages could be safely committed. When railroads began to be constructed the conductors, many of whom had been drivers of the stages which were superseded by the railways, still continued to receive and deliver parcels and orders, and the clerks of the various lines of steamboats executed like commissions. The packages, &c., intrusted to them, they delivered at the offices of their respective companies, or through such channels as might be conveniently accessible; but as this business was only supplementary to their main occupation, they could not give it the attention necessary to its enlargement, or even to its satisfactory discharge in all cases; and probably three or four times as many packages as were

conveyed by them, were transmitted by the hands of private individuals, who undertook, often very much against their inclination, the charge of delivering them to the parties to whom they were addressed.

Harnden's enterprise was not, at first, so successful as to recompense or even encourage him. It is asserted, indeed, that he was thinking of abandoning it, when the establishment of the Cunard line of steamers between Boston and Liverpool caused such an increase in the number of parcels from and to New York as to render him very great assistance, and to stimulate him to continue and extend the business he had begun. In 1840, he resolved upon an extension of his route to Philadelphia. In 1841, he undertook, in connection with Dexter Brigham, jr., of Westboro', Mass., to establish a foreign express to convey packages and parcels to Liverpool, London, and Paris, which, not having proved very successful, was discontinued in a short time. Early in the same year, being encouraged by the prospects of his extension to Philadelphia, he resolved to run an Express on the Hudson river from New York to Albany; but, failing in his endeavors to secure the co-operation of the steamboat captains, who derived considerable emoluments from the conveyance of parcels and packages, and, consequently, did not feel disposed to favor his enterprise, he made his difficulties known to me, and I undertook to arrange matters for him. This I was enabled to do through my acquaintance with Daniel Drew and others, and I undertook the Albany agency. Harnden's object in establishing this agency was to gain the control of the Express business between Boston, New York, and Albany, which formed, as it were, the apices of a triangle, the several sides of which were the Boston and Providence R. R. and the steamboat

line connecting Boston and New York; the Hudson river connecting New York and Albany; and the Western R. R., then in progress, connecting Albany and Boston.

Very shortly after commencing my duties as agent at Albany, I suggested to Harnden the expediency of running an Express to Buffalo, and, as facilities of transportation would permit, to Chicago and the "Far West;" but he had so little faith in the feasibility or success of such an enterprise that his answer to my proposition was: "*If you choose to run an Express to the Rocky mountains, you had better do it on your own account; I choose to run an Express where there is business.*"

Previous to Harnden's death in 1845, the Express business between Boston and Albany had become the property of Jas. M. Thompson, who, in 1851, in connection with Johnston Livingston and others, determined on extending the business to New Orleans, Mobile, and Texas. In 1854, this company was consolidated with several others, running from Boston to New York, into one joint-stock association, under the title of "Adams & Co's Express," though it continued to have its own routes and offices the same as before the consolidation.

Harnden's enterprise was not carried to a successful issue without competition. In 1840, Alvin Adams and P. B. Burke started an opposition Express, under the name of Burke & Co. As the business did not promise to be speedily remunerative, Burke very soon retired; but Adams (who in 1841-2 associated with himself, as partner, W. B. Dinsmore,) persisted, in the face of much opposition and of the general depression of the mercantile and industrial interests of the country at that time, in continuing a business, in the

eventual success of which he felt full confidence. The business of Adams & Co's Express was, at first, restricted to New York, Norwich, Worcester, and Boston; but the stimulus given to trade and emigration by the discovery of the gold mines of California, led to the establishment, in 1849, of a California Express. In 1850, up to which time the Express business had not been generally extended to the Southern States, a line to Mobile, New Orleans, and the far Southern and South-western States was commenced by John K. and A. L. Stimson. In 1852, this line was amalgamated with Adams & Co's.

In the same year, Adams & Co. projected a line of Express to Australia, and sent thither an agent to open an office; but want of regular and reliable communication caused its early abandonment.

Shortly after, Adams & Co. established an Express from Philadelphia to St. Louis through Pittsburgh.

In 1854, Adams & Co's Express was consolidated with Harnden's, Kinsley & Co's, and Hoey & Co's Charleston Expresses, and, in the same year, the California connection was abandoned by them. In 1855, "The Adams Express Company" (which was the designation now assumed by this association), commenced running from Charleston to Columbia, S. C., Montgomery, Ala., Atlanta and Augusta, Geo., and Nashville, Tenn.; and, at the time of the outbreak of the rebellion, had entire control of the Express business in the Southern and South-western States. Since that time, their operations in this direction have been restricted to the Border States and the coast. The main lines of their traffic are now over the Camden and Amboy, and New Jersey R. R's to Philadelphia; the Pennsylvania Central and its connections through Pennsylvania; and to Cincinnati, Louisville, St. Louis, and intermediate points.

The idea of a Western Express which I had suggested to Harnden, did not long remain a mere conception after its rejection by him. The first attempt to run such a line from Albany to Buffalo was made, under my direction, by George E. Pomeroy, in 1841; but, being relinquished by him, myself and Crawford Livingston co-operated with him in carrying out the project, under the name of Pomeroy & Co.

At that time there was no continuous line of railroad or stages on the proposed route, but the Express messenger was compelled to travel by rail to Auburn, by stage to Geneva, by rail to Rochester, to Lockport by stage, and thence to Buffalo by private conveyance; or from Rochester to Batavia by rail and thence to Buffalo by stage. The through trip occupied four nights and three days at the quickest attainable rate of traveling. For 18 months I performed all the then multifarious duties of Express messenger and agent, as well as those of proprietor; for two-thirds of that time I did not lose a trip, and out of twenty-one nights I have spent eighteen on the road.

The trip between Albany and Buffalo was, at first, made only once a week; then twice a week; and, in 1843, we undertook to maintain a daily communication. The perils encountered, the hardships endured, and the difficulties overcome in carrying out our plan, can now be scarcely imagined by those who travel in comfortable cars on well managed railroads, or in convenient coaches on roads which may be generally called decent. But at that time the railroad and all its appurtenances were in their crudest form. The line was laid with a "strap-rail," which, as you doubtless well know, was nothing more than a flat bar of iron spiked down to the sleepers and afforded no very great security against "run-offs." The spikes, too,

were continually getting loose, and, under the pressure of the passing train, the rails curved upward and, in the form of "snake-heads," often tore through the bottom of the cars to the imminent peril and, sometimes, serious injury of the limbs and lives of the passengers. The common road, (of which 115 miles by one route, and 65 miles by the other, had to be traveled by the Express messenger,) was, in summer, *endurable*, but for the greater part of the year, simply *horrible*.

So little encouraging was the prospect of a remunerative business that for more than a year after the Western Express commenced running, one carpet-sack held all the valuable packages, and a medium-sized trunk all the rest of the freight. For a long time the receipts for packages conveyed did not cover the messenger's traveling expenses; we, therefore, endeavored to increase our business by conveying fruit, fish, lobsters, and oysters, and by affording every possible accommodation to bankers, farmers, fishermen, and storekeepers on our route.

In 1842-3, the U. S. special mail agent on this route proposed to us to avail ourselves of the U. S. Mail accommodations, but we declined his overtures. Thereupon, Enoch J. Humphrey, who was employed as special bank-messenger to make the exchanges between the banks, undertook to carry on an opposition, using the mail cars and coaches for his freight and the mail agents as his messengers. Notwithstanding, however, the advantages he enjoyed as bank messenger and through his connection with the U. S. special mail agent, his scheme failed after only one week's trial.

In 1842, this Express company undertook the delivery of letters along its route at a charge of only

one-fourth of the government postage. It very soon obtained a large portion of this business, and the government, in the hope of defeating the enterprise, commenced a series of vexatious arrests and prosecutions; but public sentiment and the influence of prominent men were so overwhelmingly on the company's side, that the suits were unsuccessful, and the government was compelled to procure the enactment of a law which reduced the rates of postage to about one-fourth of what they had been. The company's experiment, however, demonstrated the possibility of profitably carrying letters at low rates; and to this Express company, more than to any other single direct agency, are the people indebted for the *decreased* cost and *increased* accommodation of postal arrangements.

At this time there were no railroads west of Buffalo; but in 1845, I undertook, in connection with W. G. Fargo of Buffalo, to extend the Western Express to Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, and intermediate points. The management of this portion of our business was mainly in the hands of W. G. Fargo, who, during the summer, availed himself, as much as possible, of steamboat conveyance, but, over a large portion of the route at all times and over the whole in winter, traveled in stages or wagons. In the winter season it frequently took eight days and nights to travel from Buffalo to Detroit, and though the charge for freight was fourteen dollars per 100 lbs., the receipts did not pay expenses. In the latter part of 1846 I removed from Buffalo to New York, and transferred my interest in the Western Express to W. A. Livingston. Since that time the business on this line has been done under the names of Livingston, Fargo & Co.

In 1846, Livingston, Wells & Co. commenced a European Express, and established offices in London and Paris. This line was united in 1855 with Edwards, Sandford & Co's Foreign Express; but, in 1858, the business was transferred to the firm of A. H. Lansing & Co., by whom it was for some time conducted.

In 1849, a rival Express was started by Butterfield, Wasson & Co.; but in 1850, this, the Wells & Co's, and the Livingston, Fargo & Co's Expresses, were consolidated into one joint-stock company under the name of the "American Express Company," with a capital of \$150,000, which has been since increased to \$3,000,000. The business on this line *west* of Buffalo is still carried on in the name of Livingston, Fargo & Co., and that *east* of Buffalo in the name of Wells, Butterfield & Co.

The principal lines of the American Express Company's business are: from Boston to Albany; from New York to Albany, Buffalo, and through the States of Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, and Minnesota; from Buffalo to Toronto, Hamilton, London, and Windsor, in Upper Canada; and to all intermediate points. Its main trunk-line of railroad conveyance is the Hudson River and the New York Central R. R's, and the roads connected therewith.

Wells, Fargo & Co's California Express was organized in New York in 1852. Its first president was Edwin B. Morgan, of Aurora, N. Y. At that time, Adams & Co's Express was the only one doing business between New York and California, and an attempt to establish another company in the face of their formidable opposition and acquired influence, demanded much courage and determination. The first

effect of the competition thus inaugurated, was the reduction of the rate for merchandise from 60 to 40 cents per lb. The Adams Co. Express had, at one time, received as much as seventy-five cents per lb.

The new association, being under the direction of energetic, practical, and responsible men, who were well known in the business world, soon succeeded in obtaining a large share of public patronage, and, after the catastrophe which annihilated the California branch of Adams & Co's Express, obtained the whole of the California business. This company now has Expresses running to all the mining districts of California, Oregon, Nevada, Colorado, and the British Possessions on the Pacific coast; to the Sandwich Islands, and to the principal ports on the western side of S. America. It has now a capital of \$2,000,000, and has been one of the most successful of Express enterprises. It has gained the entire confidence of the mercantile and banking interests in New York, San Francisco and London, between which places and all the principal points where its offices are established, it transacts an extensive Banking and Exchange business.

The association now known as the "United States Express Co.," was organized in 1854 with a view to doing a western business over the New York & Erie R. R.; which corporation, however, decided to manage for itself the Express business on its route; but the experiment being unsuccessful, the Express traffic was transferred, in 1858, to the company above named.

The United States Express Co., having a capital of \$1,000,000, does a very large business in the Western States, sending its messengers and freight over the N. Y. & Erie R. R. and all its connections, through the

States of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Southern Michigan, Wisconsin, Missouri, Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska.

The "National Express Co." was organized as a joint-stock association in 1855. The line of business which it controls was first undertaken, about 1842, by Pullen & Copp, who ran an Express from New York to Albany, Troy, and Saratoga Springs. In 1844 they united with an Express company doing business between Albany and Montreal; and, in 1855, with a rival company bearing the name of Johnston & Co., at which time the amalgamated companies assumed the above designation. The company, with a capital of \$250,000, transacts the greater part of the Express business between New York and the chief towns of Lower Canada.

Howard & Co's Express runs from Philadelphia. Its business is confined to Pennsylvania.

The Hope Express has a route in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

The New Jersey Express Co. was organized in 1854 with a capital of \$1,000,000. Its route is along the New Jersey, and Camden and Amboy R. R's, and it works in connection with the Adams Express Co.

The Eastern Express Co. was founded at Boston in 1857, by the union of three private Expresses. It has a capital of \$100,000, and its main points of business are, Boston, Portland, Augusta, and Bangor.

Kinsley & Co's Express commenced running, under the title of Gay & Co., between Boston and New York, via Stonington, in 1842, and was amalgamated with the Adams Express Co. in 1854, though it still retains its name and organization.

Cheney, Fiske & Co's Express runs between Boston, Quebec, and Montreal; and into the interior of the States of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

The line of business of the Long Island Express Co. is from New York to the various points of the Long Island R. R.

There are numerous minor companies, none of which, however, are, in my opinion, sufficiently important to require specification.

In the principal cities there are numerous lines of "City Expresses," which collect and deliver all kinds of goods within a certain limited area, and of "Baggage Expresses," whose business is to convey travelers' baggage to and from hotels, steamboats, railroads and private dwellings. As these, however, do not fall properly within the category of Express companies, whose history I have endeavored to give you, I need do no more than simply mention the fact of their existing.

You may have observed, as I indicated in general terms the routes of the three great inland Express companies—the Adams, American, and United States—that, though their business is, in the main, confined within certain geographical limits, they come, in some parts of their course, into direct competition with each other, particularly for the local business. A glance at the map on which their main lines are delineated will make this point clearer than any amount of words. It may not be amiss to remark that the business is so large and the competition so honorably conducted that, while the public is better accommodated, the interests of the respective associations are no-wise injuriously affected.

Of the amount of business done by the Express com-

panies now in operation, it is next to impossible to give any accurate information. No merchant is willing to give to the public a specific statement of his income, his profits, or his losses. Neither do Express companies desire to invite competition by an exhibit of large gains, or to excite mistrust by a confession of large losses. The only way I know of giving you any idea of the magnitude of their operations is by stating that the annual expenses of the Adams, American, and United States companies, incurred in the transportation of freight and the salaries of agents and messengers, amount to not less than *ten millions of dollars* ; that the single carpet-sack of 1839 has now grown into more than thirty cars forwarded daily from the East by the American Express Co. alone, while the Adams and United States Co's each require at least an equal amount of transportation ; that the American Express conveys freight over 9,000 miles a day in a *direct* line, while its messengers travel daily more than 30,000 miles, and wherever on this extensive route there is a village with a post-office, this company has an agency at that point. Indeed, the Rocky Mountains, to which Harnden banteringly said in 1841, I might run an Express at my own risk if I pleased, has long been within the points to which Expresses have been extended.

When to these scanty items of information I add that, notwithstanding very large losses inflicted upon Express companies by public robberies, or by the dishonesty or carelessness of their employees, they have paid, for the most part, remunerative dividends to their stock-holders, without exacting unreasonable payments from their customers, I may, perhaps, have succeeded in giving you some data for estimating the immense amount of business transacted by them.

The present flourishing condition of the principal Express companies has not been attained without opposition from rival associations. Some of these were sufficiently formidable to render advisable their incorporation with previously established companies whose business was menaced by their operations, while many others failed to secure patronage sufficient to sustain them. Several railroad companies—I have mentioned one instance in my account of the United States Express Co.—have, at various times, attempted to carry on the Express business as a part of their legitimate operations; but they very soon discovered that it was better for them to leave it in the hands of associations specially organized for such business. The successful management of an Express company requires the undivided attention of its conductors; a peculiar order of business talent; facilities for securing the direct transmission of freight over railroads belonging to different, and often rival or unfriendly, companies; perfect control over and strict accountability of the employees; and a special and intricate system of accounts, checks, and balances.

The influence of the Express on the general business interests of the country has been very marked and beneficial. Business is always found to prosper in proportion to the facilities afforded for the speedy, safe, and economical transmission of money, merchandise, and produce; and these the Express has supplied to an extent unprecedented in the history of previous transportation companies.

When I commenced the Western Express from Albany to Buffalo, so unremunerative was the through traffic, that I made every possible effort to induce producers at each end of and throughout my route to forward fruit, fish, game, and similar articles of luxury;

and as they found it greatly to their advantage to do so, from the small beginnings then made, the interchange of such commodities between the East and the West gradually increased to the enormous extent which it has now reached, but which it never could have attained without the aid of the Express. When, in 1842, at the request of that prince of caterers, Jas. Laidley, then of Buffalo, I carried oysters from Albany, receiving for freight \$3 per 100 (*oysters* not pounds), their arrival in Buffalo was advertised in the Newspapers, and created almost as much excitement as the locomotive on its first trip through the country. Till they were thus conveyed, the Buffalonians were often deprived, for months, of that bivalvular luxury ; now, several car loads of oysters leave New York, Albany, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, for the West daily throughout the season. Through the facilities of transmission offered by the Express, the game of the Western forests and prairies is now as abundant in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, as barn-yard poultry ; while the luxuries of the ocean and of foreign lands are as common in the markets of Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis, as in those of the Eastern cities. Indeed, it may be truthfully said, that, with the aid of the telegraph and the Express, a gentleman in almost any part of the Eastern, Western, or Middle States, wishing to give a *recherché* dinner-party, has the markets of the country from the Atlantic coast to the Rocky Mountains at his disposal.

Expresses have always kept pace with—sometimes they have run in advance of—railroads, and by the traffic they have secured, have augmented in no small degree the revenues of those corporations which have so materially contributed to the rapid development of the vast resources of the wide West.

Previous to the establishment of the Express, the United States bank transacted all exchange business between distant points. When that corporation was dissolved, the need of some medium through which remittances and exchanges might be safely made, was widely felt. The Express met this want, and, indeed, transacted all such business at less cost than the U. S. bank had done. When remittances could be made only by drafts or in specie, sent by special messenger, (whose safe transit or fidelity could not, in all instances, be implicitly depended on,) the rate of exchange or cost of transmission, which varied from 1 to 10 per cent., was a heavy tax on such transactions. But the ease, safety, and cheapness with which specie, drafts, notes, and other valuable documents may now be forwarded through the Express, has greatly facilitated such remittances and equalized the rate of exchange, which rarely exceeds 1 or  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. The immense amount of money used by the government in all its varied operations throughout the country is now conveyed by the Express, which also conducts the entire exchange business of the country.

Moreover, Express companies undertake to collect bills for merchandise forwarded through them, and to receive from merchants, importers, jobbers, and others, goods which are to be paid for on delivery, the Express assuming the responsibility. They, thus, enable parties, unknown even to each other save by name, to transact mutually advantageous business without risk and at very small cost. Such transactions, now amounting annually to millions of dollars, could not, through want of mutual acquaintance and confidence on the part of the parties engaged in it, be carried on but for the Express. The benefit thus conferred on the trade of the country is, obviously, incalculable.

Did the limits of this paper permit, and were this the place for the recital, I could narrate many incidents of peril, exposure, and almost miraculous escapes, equalling anything to be found in the pages of romance. I remember, however, that I stand before gentlemen who, in their aggregate capacity at least, deal with the "hard facts" of statistical and geographical science, not with the reveries or fictions of the poet and the novelist. These may stigmatize facts as "the brute beasts of the intellectual field;" but they are, in *fact*, the ready-to-be-articulated framework on which the useful and graceful forms of civilization may be developed; or, rather, they are the hewn and polished stones with which the temple of science is constructed. But there are "facts" in the history of the Express which add fresh corroboration to the truth of the adage: "Truth is stranger than fiction." I could tell of midnight adventures in the forest; of perils in the waters; of perils by robbers; of awful catastrophes, such as the burning of the "Lexington," the "Central America," and the "Golden Gate," and the swamping of the Atlantic; of wrecks upon the fickle, stormy Erie; of robberies ingeniously planned and even more ingeniously discovered; of humorous, pathetic, and tragical occurrences;—all of which have fallen within the experience of Express messengers,—but I forbear. Are they not already written in the records of the Express companies, and in the chronicles of Gotham? We—some of us, at least,—have read, in the days when poetry and fiction had their attractions for us, Romances of the Forest, the Rail, the Road, the Ocean, and even the "raging Canawl;" shall not our grand and great-grand-children read, in coming years, the "Romance of the Express?"





